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# Three Served Their Country Badly

**THE PHILBY CONSPIRACY,** By Bruce Page, David Leitch and Philip Knightley, with an introduction by John le Carre (Doubleday and Co.: 300 pages, \$5.95).

This frightening book, the work of three British journalists, is an account of two comparatively minor traitors, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, and that major spy, Soviet agent, and master of treachery, Kim Philby.

Recruited while students at Cambridge (Trinity College for Philby and Burgess, King's for Maclean) these three devoted their lives, while ostensibly serving their country, to betraying its most vital secrets to their Russian masters.

And, due to the close relationship existing at the time between the British and ourselves, particularly that between the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and our fledgling Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), they also made off with our most important secrets.

For at least 30 years prior to 1963, when Philby finally "went home" to Moscow, neither flagrant homosexuality nor spectacular drunkenness nor a known Communist background was any bar to employment in the most sensitive positions in the British government. Such people also enjoyed social acceptance in diplomatic circles and access to the most secret information to be found in Washington, D.C.

Even when the simultaneous defections to Russia of Burgess and Maclean pointed the finger of suspicion in-

capably at Philby, his SIS colleagues hotly declared it inconceivable that he could be guilty of anything, and effectively blocked any real investigation of his activities.

A year after the defections which first placed him under suspicion, he was given a secret "trial" of which John le Carre says in his introduction: "(He) was incompetently tried in private and incompetently exonerated in public. (He) held out, with astonishing gall, against what seemed to be a foregone conclusion. (He) knew the great weakness of the Establishment: 'This Club does not elect traitors; therefore Kim is not a traitor.'"

Philby continued, it appears, on the SIS payroll for 12 more years before the decision was taken to frighten him into defecting to Moscow; a public trial would have been "politically undesirable."

Burgess was a minor-league operator and a psychological misfit. Maclean was a successful spy of the nuts-and-bolts variety, able to pass huge quantities of valuable and hard-to-get facts across to the Soviets.

But Philby was the really

big operator. The authors tell us: "In 1949 he was sent to Washington, with the rank of first secretary, to be the SIS liaison man with the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this posting..."

"His contacts ranged from the director..., Gen. Bedell Smith, down through the ranks. He was privy to CIA planning. He told the CIA what the SIS was doing. He was often briefed by Bedell Smith himself on top policy, and above all, he knew what the CIA knew about Soviet operations."

The scope of Philby's betrayal can be only guessed at; the damage he caused will

things about the interwoven scandal of the Philby-Burgess-Maclean affair is that it illustrates, in almost parable form, so many of the curable weaknesses of our society... (It) tells us a good deal about the role of privilege in our society, and the degree to which irrelevant insignia of social and economic status can be fatally mistaken for evidence of political acceptability.

"It also gives us an idea of how much our bureaucracy is prepared to hide: The White Paper on Burgess and Maclean, and the tightly circumscribed official accounts of the role Kim Philby played in British affairs, are classic warnings to those who are tempted to believe the official